

**A HISTORICAL SPEECH OF GREGORY DEKAPOLITES, VERY PROFITABLE AND MOST PLEASING IN MANY WAYS, ABOUT A VISION WHICH A SARRACEN ONCE HAD, AND WHO, AS A RESULT OF THIS, BELIEVED AND BECAME A MARTYR FOR OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**



[1201 A] Father, give your blessing.

Nicholas, the *strategos*, called Joulas, has related to me that in his town, which the Sarracens<sup>16</sup> call in their language "Vineyard," the Emir<sup>17</sup> of Syria sent his nephew to administer some works under construction in the said castle. In that place, there is also a big church, old and splendid, dedicated to Saint George, the most glorious martyr.<sup>18</sup> When the Sarracen saw the church from a distance, he ordered his servants to bring his belongings and the camels themselves, twelve of them, inside the church so that he may be able to supervise them from a high place as they were fed.<sup>19</sup>

[120 IB] As for the priests of that venerable church, they pleaded with him, saying: "Master, do not do such things; this is a church of God. Do not show disrespect towards it, and do not bring the camels inside the holy altar of God." But the Saracen, who was pitiless and stubborn, did not want even to listen to the pleas of the presbyters. Instead, he said to his servants, in Arabic: "Do you not do what you have been commanded to do?" Immediately, his servants did as he commanded them. But suddenly, the camels, as they were led into the church, all, by the

command of God, fell down dead.<sup>20</sup> When the Saracen saw the extraordinary miracle, he became ecstatic<sup>21</sup> and ordered his servants to take away the dead camels and throw them away from the church, and they did so.

[1201C] As it was a holiday on that day and the time for the Divine Liturgy was approaching, the priest who was to start the holy service of the preparation of the gifts was very much afraid of the Saracen; how could he start the bloodless sacrifice in front of him! Another priest, co-communicant to him, said to the priest who was to celebrate the Liturgy: "Do not be afraid. Did you not see the extraordinary miracle? Why are you hesitant?" Thus, the priest, without fear, started the holy service of offering.<sup>22</sup>

The Saracen noticed all these and waited to see what the priest [1204A] was going to do. The priest began the holy service of offering and took the loaf of bread to prepare the holy sacrifice. But the Saracen saw that the priest took in his hand a child, which he slaughtered, drained the blood inside the cup, cut the body into pieces, and placed them on the tray! <sup>23</sup>

As the Saracen saw these things, he became furious with anger and, enraged at the priest, he wanted to kill him. When the time of the Great Entrance approached, the Saracen saw again, and more manifestly, the child cut into four pieces on the tray, his blood in the cup. He became again ecstatic with rage. Towards the end of the Divine Liturgy, as some of the Christians wanted to receive [1204B] the holy communion and as the priest said, "With the fear of God and with faith draw near,"<sup>24</sup> all the Christians bent their heads in reverence. Some of them went forward to receive the holy sacrament. Again, for a third time, the Saracen saw that the priest, with a spoon, was offering to the communicants from the body and the blood of the child. The repentant Christians received the holy sacrament. But the Saracen saw that they had received communion from the body and the blood of the child, and at that, he became filled with anger and rage against everybody.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the priest distributed the antidoron to all Christians.<sup>25</sup> He then took off his priestly vestments and offered to the Saracen a piece from the bread.<sup>26</sup> But he said, [1204C] in Arabic: "What is this?" The priest answered: "Master, it is from the bread from which we celebrated the liturgy." And the Saracen said angrily: "Did you celebrate the Liturgy from that, you dog, impure, dirty, and killer? Didn't I see that you took and slaughtered a child and that you poured his blood into the cup, and mutilated his body and placed on the plate members of his, here and there? Didn't I see all these, you polluted one and killer? Didn't I see you eating and drinking from the body and blood of the child and that you even offered the same to the attendants? They now have in their mouths pieces of flesh dripping blood."



When the priest heard this, he became ecstatic and said: "Master, [1204D] I am a sinner, and I am not able to see such a mystery. But since your Lordship saw such a mystery, I believe in God that you, indeed, are a great man."

And the Saracen said: "Is this not what I saw?" And the priest: "Yes, my Lord, this is how it is; but myself, being a sinner, I am not able to see such a mystery, but only bread and wine. Indeed, we believe we hold, and we sacrifice this bread and wine as a figuration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, even the great and marvellous Fathers, the stars and teachers of the [1205A] Church, like the divine Basil the Great and the memorable Chrysostom and Gregory the Theologian, were unable to see this awesome and terrifying mystery. How can I see it?"

When the Saracen heard this, he became ecstatic and ordered his servants and everybody inside to leave the church. He then took the priest by the hand and said: "As I see and as I have heard, great is the faith of the Christians. So, if you so will, Father, baptize me." And the priest said to the Saracen: "Master, we believe in and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came to the world for our salvation. We also believe in [1205B] the Holy Trinity, the consubstantial and undivided one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one Godhead. We also believe in Mary, the ever-virgin mother of light, who has given birth to the fruit of life, our pre-announced Lord, Jesus Christ. She was a virgin before, a virgin during, and a virgin after giving birth. We believe also that all the holy apostles, prophets, martyrs, saints, and righteous men are servants of God. Do you not realize, therefore, my master, that the greatest faith is that of the Orthodox Christians?"

And the Saracen said again: "I beg you, Father, baptize me." But the priest answered: "Far from that. I cannot do such a thing, for if I do and your nephew<sup>27</sup> the Emir hears of that, he will kill [1205C] me and destroy this church, too.<sup>28</sup> But if it is, indeed, your wish to be baptized, go to that place in the Sinai mountain. There, there is the bishop; he will baptize you."<sup>29</sup>

The Saracen prostrated himself in front of the presbyter and walked out of the church. Then, one hour after nightfall, he came back to the priest, took off his royal golden clothes, put on a poor sack of wool,<sup>30</sup> and left in secret by night. He walked to Mount Sinai, where he received the holy baptism from the bishop.

He also learned from the Psalter and recited verses from it daily.<sup>31</sup>

[1205D] One day, three years later, he [the former Saracen] said to the bishop: "Forgive me, Master, what am I supposed to do in order to see Christ?" And the bishop said: "Pray with the right faith, and one of these days you will see Christ, according to your wish."<sup>32</sup> But the former Saracen said again: "Master, give me your consent to go to the priest who offered me instruction

when I saw the awesome vision in the church of the most glorious martyr George."<sup>33</sup> The bishop said: "Go, in peace."



*Miniature of Saint Gregory of Dekapolis, from the Menologion of Basil II, ca. 985.*

[1208A] Thus, he went to the priest, prostrated himself in front of him, embraced him, and said, "Do you know, Father, who I am?" And the priest: "How can I recognize a man whom I have never seen before?" But, again, the former Saracen said: "Am I not the nephew of the Emir, who brought the camels inside the church and they all died, and who during the Divine Liturgy saw that terrifying vision?" When the priest looked at him, he was amazed and praised God, seeing that the former Arab wolf had become a most calm sheep of Christ. He embraced him with passion and invited him to his cell to eat bread.

And the former Saracen said: "Forgive me, Master and Father, but I want and have a desire to see Christ. How can I do that?" [1208B] And the priest said: "If you wish to see Christ, go to your nephew<sup>34</sup> and preach Christ to him. Curse and anathematize the faith of the Saracens and their false prophet Muhammad and preach the true faith of the Christians correctly without fear, and thus you will see Christ."<sup>35</sup>

[1208C] The former Saracen left in earnest. By night, he was forcefully knocking at the door of the Saracen. The guards at the gate of the house of the Emir asked: "Who is yelling and knocking at the door?" And he answered: "I am the nephew of the Emir who left some time ago and was lost. Now I want to see my nephew<sup>36</sup> and tell him something." The guards of the gate conveyed



this to the Saracen immediately: "Master, it is your nephew who left some time ago and was lost." The Emir, heaving a sigh, said: "Where is he?" They said: "At the gate of the palace." He then ordered his servants to go and meet him with lights and candles. They all did as the king, Emir, commanded, and they took the monk, the former Saracen by the hand and presented him to the Emir, his nephew.

When the Emir saw him, he was very glad. He embraced him with tears in his eyes and said to him: "What is this? Where were [1208D] you living all this time? Are you not my nephew?" And the monk said: "Don't you recognize me, your nephew? Now, as you see, by the grace of God the Most High, I have become a Christian and a monk. I have been living in desert places so that I may inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. I hope in the unspeakable compassion of the All-sovereign God to inherit his kingdom. Why are you hesitating yourself, too, Emir? Receive the holy baptism of the Orthodox Christians in order to inherit eternal life, as I hope to do."

The Emir laughed, scratched his head, and said, "What are you chattering about, you miserable one? What are you chattering about? What has happened to you? Alas, you pitiful one! How did you abandon [1209A] your life and the sceptres of reign and roam around as a beggar, dressed in these filthy clothes made of hair?"

The monk responded to him: "By the grace of God. As far as all the things I used to have when I was a Saracen, these were [material] property and were of the devil. But these things that you see me wearing are a glory and pride, and an engagement with the future and eternal life. I anathematize the religion of the Saracens and their false prophet."

Then the Emir said: "Take him out, for he does not know what he is chattering about." They took him away and put him in a place in the palace, where they gave him food and drink. He spent three days there but took neither food nor drink. He was praying [1209B] to God earnestly and with faith. Going down to his knees, he said, 'O Lord, I have hoped in thee; let me never be ashamed,<sup>37</sup> neither let my enemies laugh at me to scorn."<sup>38</sup> And again: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions."<sup>39</sup> And again: "Enlighten my eyes, Lord God, that I may not fall asleep into death; that my enemy may never say 'I have overpowered him'. 'Strengthen my heart, O Lord,' so that I may be able to fight the visible deceiver, the Saracen; so that the evil devil may not stamp on me and make me fear death, for your holy name." He then made the sign of the cross and said: "The Lord is my enlightenment and [1209C] my saviour. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life. From whom will I hesitate?" And again, he cried out to the Emir: "Receive holy baptism in order to gain the immeasurable kingdom of God."

Again, the Emir ordered him to be brought in front of him. He had prepared exceedingly beautiful clothes for him. And the Emir spoke: "Enjoy, you pitiful one, enjoy and rejoice for

being a king. Do not disdain your life and your youth, which is so beautiful, walking instead mindlessly like a beggar and a penniless one. Alas, you pitiful one. What do you think?"

The monk laughed and replied to the Emir: "Do not weep at what I have in mind. I am thinking of how to be able to fulfil the [1209D] work of my Christ and that of the Father priest who has sent me and has been my teacher. As for the clothes you have prepared for me, sell them and give the money to the poor. You, too, should abandon the temporary sceptres of the reign so that you may receive sceptres of eternal life. Do not rest your hope on things of the present but on things which are of the future, and do not believe in the pseudo-prophet Muhammad, the impure, the detestable one, the son of hell. Believe, rather, in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the crucified one. Believe that the one Godhead is a consubstantial Trinity; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a Trinity of the same essence, and undivided."

The Emir laughed again and said to the officials who had [1212A] gathered in the palace: "This man is mindless. What shall we do with him? Take him out and expel him." Those, however, sitting by the king said: "He meant to desecrate and corrupt the religion of the Saracens. Do you not hear how he curses and anathematizes our great prophet?"

The monk and former Saracen cried out loudly: "I feel sorry for you, Emir, because you, unfortunate one, do not want to be saved. Believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified one, and anathematize the religion of the Saracens and their false prophet, as I did."

The Saracen Emir said, "Take him out, as I am ordering [1212B] you. He is mindless and does not know what he is talking about."

Those sitting by him said: "Well, you heard that he anathematized the religion of the Saracens and that he is blaspheming against the great prophet, and you say, 'He does not know what he is talking about?' If you do not have him killed, we will also go and become Christians."

And the Emir said: "I cannot have him killed because he is my nephew, and I feel sorry for him. But you take him and do as you please."

They got hold of the monk with great anger. They dragged [1212C] him out of the palace and tortured him to try to make him return to the previous religion of the Saracens. But he did not. Instead, he taught everybody to believe and be saved in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The Sarracens dragged him out of the city, and there they stoned him to death,<sup>40</sup> this most pious monk, whose name was Pachomios.



On that night, a star came down from heaven and rested on top of the most pious martyr, and everybody could see it for forty days;<sup>41</sup> and many of them became believers.

With the prayers of the most blessed martyr, of the all-pure [1212D] Mother of God Mary, who is ever-virgin, and of all the saints, for the remission of our sins. Amen.

**Source:** Daniel J. Sahas, *GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL REVIEW* Volume 31, Nos. 1-2, 1986, pp. 47-67.



*The incorrupt relics of Saint Gregory the Decapolite at Bistrița Monastery, Romania.*

## NOTES

16. The name "Saracen" is used here, meaning "Muslim." It occurs frequently in Byzantine literature. Philip K. Hitti has suggested that the name derives from the Arabic *sharq* and *sharqîyûn* (East and Easterners) and refers to the land and the tribes east of Palestine ([\*History of the Arabs\*](#) [10th ed., New York, 1973, p. 43.]). After the emergence of Islam, the name "Saracen" in Byzantine anti-Islamic literature was used with the meaning of "Muslim."

17. The word used here is *Ἀμερομυνής*, an obvious Hellenization of the Arabic title *Amîr al-mu'minîn*, "Ruler of the Faithful". The first to assume this title was 'Umar, the second caliph (634-644). Other Umayyad and, subsequently, Abbasid caliphs followed his example, as did some rival smaller rulers. The title was assumed more frequently by rulers in the West. Since the text specifically calls this *amir al-mu'minin* "Emir of Syria," the reference must be to one of the Umayyad caliphs ruling from Damascus from 661 to 750. The Hellenized title *Ἀμερομυνής* occurs also in the writing of Arethas of Caesarea (850-932): "To the Emir in Damascus at the

request of Romanos the Emperor"; *Arethae Archiepiscopi Caesariensis. Scripta Minora*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Leipzig, 1968), 1, p. 242. On Arethas, see Daniel J. Sahas "Arethas's 'Letter to the Emir at Damascus': Official or popular views on Islam in the 10th century Byzantium?" *The Patristic and Byzantine Review* 3 (1984) 69-81.

**18.** The affection of Muslims for Saint George is very interesting, although not yet thoroughly explained. The Muslim Arabs of the Middle East, especially those who have lived in co-existence with Orthodox Christians, have shown a remarkable reverence for Saint George, the military saint, who is depicted riding a horse and killing the dragon. Perhaps the link between the Muslims and Saint George is Abyssinian Christianity. This pre-Chalcedonian Coptic Church, with its many Jewish and Semitic practices (arks, circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, claims of its emperors as being "sons of David and Solomon," etc.), respects Saint George as its patron saint. Ancient texts indicate that the Ethiopians were partly under Mosaic law, and in part, they worshiped the Serpent. No wonder, therefore, that Saint George is a patron saint of Ethiopia; Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Christianity* (London, 1979), p. 60. The encounter of Islam with Abyssinia goes back to the time of Muhammad himself. *The Life of Muhammad* (A translation of Ishāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, by A. Guillaume [Oxford, 1969]), pp. 146-55. Heroes who defeat superhuman creatures and evil powers seem to have attracted people of various cultures and religious traditions. There is such a hero also in Islam, Abu Zayd, known as Bu Zīd il-Hilālī in Zafar and North Arabia. The Muslim fascination with him is because he defeated a huge monster plaguing the country, whom no one else had managed to contain. For the text of this story with an introduction and commentary, see T. M. Johnstone, "A St. George of Dhofar" *Arabian Studies*, 5 (1978) 59-65.

**19.** The description suggests that the church, being big and splendid, had a balcony usually reserved for women. The Emir occupied this balcony for his private quarters, while he had planned to use the nave as a stable for the camels.

**20** Theophanes the Chronographer (d. 818) mentions a similar case in which "the camels of the chief minister were burned in the church of Saint Elijah; *Chronographia*, ed. De Boor, 1, 404.14-15. This incident reportedly took place in Caesarea, Cappadocia, in the second year of Hisham's reign, i.e. in 726. Do these similar reports by two independent sources suggest a usual Muslim practice? They perhaps suggest a more hostile attitude toward and treatment of the Christians by the Muslims, uncharacteristic of the earliest Umayyad caliphs. Hishām was the son of 'Abd-al-Malik (684-705), the caliph who initiated hostile measures against the Christians under his rule.

**21.** The expression "to become, or be ecstatic" occurs frequently and characteristically in this text. It is an expression of a mystical disposition rather than of an ordinary way of speaking. "Ecstasy, " etymologically speaking, is the state of being in which a person is removed from (ère)



the place on which one "stands" (στάσις), to a different state, or "world." The frequency of such expressions and the theme of the sermon, which is about a vision, clearly manifest the text's mystical character.

**22.** This service is called προσκομιδή, literally meaning "offering" of the gifts. It is the service prior to the divine Liturgy itself and to the communion service, during which the gifts for the communion are received and prepared. The rites of the προσκομιδή commemorate the nativity of Christ, "who, from the first moment of his incarnation, was the Lamb destined to be sacrificed for the sons of men"; D. Sokolof, *A Manual of the Orthodox Church's Divine Services* (Jordanville, N.Y., 1962), p. 62. The subsequent vision of the Saracen seems to support this meaning of the προσκομιδή.

**23.** The priest extracts small pieces and particles from a loaf of bread. These various pieces represent Christ himself, the Theotokos, the angels, the apostles, the martyrs, the saints, the living members of the Church and those who have passed away. These pieces of bread are subsequently mixed in the chalice with the wine, consecrated during the Liturgy and offered as communion. Thus, communion in the Orthodox Church is a sacrament of an existential union between each individual and the entire Church, visible and invisible, past and present, within the body of Christ.

The προσκομιδή rites commemorate the Nativity. See note above. Despite its predominant paschal character, the eucharistic service is also closely related to Nativity. John Chrysostom, the modifier of the Divine Liturgy, which is the most often celebrated one in the Orthodox Church, has frequently identified the altar with a spiritual cradle and the Eucharist with a memorial of Christ's passion but also with his infancy; thus, the existence of a number of parallel edifying anecdotes and sermons such as this, presenting Christ as an infant being sacrificed physically in the place of elements. For such references, see Christopher Walter, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London, 1982), pp. 209-10.

The tradition of the Christ child standing out from inside the chalice before dismemberment, surrounded by angels and the Fathers-authors of the Divine Liturgy, has been preserved by the iconography in the theme of Melismos (literally, dismemberment). Such an icon can be seen, for example, in a fresco in the niche of the sanctuary in the abbot's tower at the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Thessaly, Greece. See John T. A. Koumoulides, *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments at Aghia in Thessaly, Greece: The Art and Architecture of the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon* (London, 1975), pp. 35 and 36, fig. 15 and 15a.

**24.** The full liturgical invitation to receive communion is: "With the fear of God, with faith, and with love, draw near.

**25.** Ἀντίδοπον means that which is offered "instead of the gift." These are small pieces of bread from the non-consecrated part of the loaf that the priest distributes at the end of the Liturgy to those who, for whatever reason, did not receive the sacrament. The ἀντίδοπον is not a substitute for communion but a pastoral gesture of the Church acknowledging and, in a way, rewarding the presence of everybody in the celebration of the Eucharist.

**26.** This detail ("he took off his priestly vestments and offered . . .") clarifies the distinction that the Orthodox Church makes between partaking in communion with members of the one Church, and participating in a religious service or prayer with members from different churches; even with people from different religious traditions!

**27.** At the beginning of the sermon, the Saracen was stated as the nephew of the Emir; PG 100.1201A. See also 1208B and 1208C.

**28.** Regulating the rights and obligations of Christians whose cities had fallen under Muslim domination, an early ordinance attributed to Umar (although it probably belongs to the era of \*Umar II, 717-720) explicitly prohibits the conversion of a Muslim to Christianity: "We will not show off our religion, nor invite anyone to embrace it."

The same ordinance prohibits the repair of any old religious institution, let alone the erection of any new church, monastery, or hermitage. It also prohibits the display of crosses and sacred books in the streets and marketplaces where Muslims live, the ringing of bells loudly, religious processions on Palm and Easter Sundays, and prayers sung in loud voices near Muslim quarters!

**29.** The reference here is, obviously, to the Monastery of the Transfiguration, known as the Monastery of Saint Catherine, in Sinai. This monastery was erected as a monastery-fortress during the reign of Justinian (527-565) and encompassed older hermitages going back to the early fourth century and Empress Helen, the mother of the first Roman Christian Emperor Constantine (324-337). By a Justinian law (PG 86.1149) respected until today, the monastery's abbot holds the bishop's office with the title of "archbishop." The monastery also had a number of metochia or dependencies in its possession. These were scattered throughout the Sinai peninsula, Cairo, Gaza, various parts of Syria, Crete, mainland Greece, and possibly in Romania and Russia. Some of these metochia are still in existence and active. The history of the monastery, famous for its wealth of icons and manuscripts (including the *Codex Sinaiticus* now in the British Museum) and for its long tradition in monastic spirituality, is one of the most fascinating places and examples of Muslim-Eastern Christian relations. Bedouin Muslims still surround the monastery and serve as guardians. They hold the authority of the Christian archbishop in high respect, demonstrate their devotion to Christian saints, especially Saint Catherine and to Saint George, and defend their allegiance to the monastery, a strange type of "citizenship" which remains unaffected by the shifting national borders between Israel and Egypt



in recent years! For a brief excursus through the history of the monastery, see K. Amantos, *Σύντομος Ιστορία της Ἱερας Μονῆς του Σινά* (Thessalonike, 1953); Evangelos Papaioannou, *The Monastery of St. Catherine* (Athens, 1976); George H. Forsyth and K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Church and Fortress of Justinian* (Ann Arbor, 1973).

The monks still today show an Arabic manuscript, which they claim to be an ordinance written by Muhammad himself, ordering the Muslims to preserve the inviolability of the monastery.

The words of the priest in this story seem to confirm an early tradition giving immunity to the monastery of Sinai from any interference of the Islamic state.

**30.** This was the characteristic garment of Christian ascetics. One of the explanations given to the name Sufi for a Muslim mystic is that it is a derivative of the word suf (wool). The name Sufi, which is related to the woollen gown worn by early Sufis, is related to Muslim ascetics influenced by their Christian counterparts. That such a practice was prevalent in early Islam is evident by the debate on the appropriateness of such a gown between two contemporary Muslims. The ascetic Hasan al-Basrî (d. 110/728) justified the woollen gown of the ascetics as an act of imitation of such prophets as Jesus and David, while Ibn Sîrîn (d. 110/728) condemned it as contrary to the tradition of the Prophet "who clothed himself in cotton"! Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 35

**31.** See below, footnote 37-39.

**32.** The definite answer of the abbot and its emphasis on prayer betrays, perhaps, a direct influence on him of John Klimakos, a mystic of the Christian East. John (+ ca. 649) is the well-known abbot of the Monastery of Sinai and the author of the spiritual writing *The Ladder* (in Greek *Κλίμαξ*, ) after which he was surnamed. The text of *The Ladder of Paradise*, in PG 88.631-1210; trans. Colm Luibheid and Norman Russell, as *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York, 1982). John of the Ladder is a major "witness of monastic spirituality based upon the invocation of the 'name of Jesus.'" John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, 1979), p. 70. Most likely, the "prayer of the heart," as the prayer of Jesus is otherwise called, was already practiced in Sinai prior to John of the Ladder. The invocation of the name of Jesus or "Jesus prayer" ("Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me the sinner") is a kind of dhikr, aiming at concentrating the mind, collecting it from wandering around and bringing about an experience of and a union with the divine presence. As John of the Ladder taught, the Jesus prayer was not meant to be an exercise of the mind alone but one of the whole human being remembering and participating in the experience of the transfigured Christ.

**33.** Does the request reflect, perhaps, the novice monk's dissatisfaction with the contemplative hesychastic practices at Sinai and his search for a more immediate and direct spiritual experience?

**34.** The priest continues treating the Saracen as the Emir's uncle instead of the Emir's nephew! See above n. 27 and below n. 36.

**35.** In reality, the priest invites the convert to become a martyr! Monasticism, as a way of "dying" for the world and offering a witness to the world, and martyrdom, has been viewed by the early Christian East as two sides of the same coin—that of witness (in Greek μαρτυρία) and imitation of Christ. The earliest ascetics saw monasticism as an alternative to martyrdom, where martyrdom, resulting from persecution by the State, was not possible. Thus, while ascetics sought to experience a union with Christ in the flesh, martyrs sought to achieve a union with Christ beyond and in spite of the flesh.

**36.** From this evidence, it becomes evident that either there is confusion in the terms, or an uncle and a nephew are both called in relationship to each other "nephew." The word "uncle" occurs nowhere in the text; see notes 27 and 34 above.

**37.** Ps. 30 (31) 1; 70 (71).1

**38.** Ps. 24 (25) 2.

**39.** Ps. 50 (51) 1.

**40.** Denouncing Islam (ridda, apostasy) has traditionally been met in Islam by the death penalty. The practice goes back to Abu Bakr, the first caliph (632-634) who brought the tribes, which apostatized after the death of Muhammad, by force back to the central authority of Medina. See also Fazlur Rahman, "The Law of Rebellion in Islam," in *Islam in the Modern World* (1983 Paine Lectures in Religion, the University of Missouri-Columbia, 1983), pp. 1-10, at 1-2. Most neo-martyrs of the Orthodox Church were actually converts to Christianity from Islam or crypto-Christians. On the neo-martyrs, see R. M. Dawkins, "The crypto-Christians of Turkey," *Byzantion* 8 (1933) 247-75; N. Russell, "Neomartyrs of the Greek Calendar," *Sobornost* 5 (1983) 36-62; Demetrios J. Constantelos, "The Neomartyrs as Evidence for Methods and Motives Leading to Conversion and Martyrdom in the Ottoman Empire," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 23 (1978) 216-31.

**41.** Since the words "star" and "martyr" in Greek are of masculine gender, it is not clear from the text whether "everyone was able to see him" (the martyr) or "it" (the star).



